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ABSTRACT

Included in this annotated bibliography of 11 publications on training and selecting principals are reports assessing various approaches and their relationship to school improvement. One article proposes a training model based on contingency theory. A sourcebook reviews hiring practice inadequacies and alternatives and recommends Hillsborough County's (Florida) methods. Improvement in training and selection was recognized at the Southern Regional Educational Board's conference, which is summarized. A principal's positive experience following an assessment center program is followed by another article demonstrating that successful principals evolve through four stages that should be part of inservice programs. The author of a literature review concludes that administrators should hire principals who are "boat rockers." A report focuses on leadership styles and use of a training model. Another report stresses that field-based preparation should close the gap between training and employment. An article describes an internship program developed by a South Carolina district and the University of South Carolina. Two companion articles portray Maryland's program for improving selection and training and provide ingredients for effective assessment. A concluding selection reminds administrators that choosing a principal requires sound planning. (CJH)

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The Best of ERIC presents annotations of ERIC literature on important topics in educational management.

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ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management
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Training and Selecting Principals

1 **Allen, Carol, and others.** "Model for Administrator Training, Development Uses Both Theory and Practice." *NASSP Bulletin*, 68, 468 (January 1984), pp. 14-19. EJ 291 482.

The model described in this article is intended to serve as "a framework for improving administrator performance in the promotion of the success of the individual and the organization." The model is based on contingency theory, which recognizes that educators must base their administrative decisions and choices upon the characteristics and environment of their schools or school districts, in conjunction with the particular kind of tasks they wish to carry out.

The Contingency Framework for Administrative Development (CFAD) model is conceptualized as three concentric circles, each circle representing one dimension of the decision-making process. The three dimensions— administrative tasks, administrative processes, and administrative traits— contain specific elements, for example, instruction and curriculum in the task dimension, budgeting in the process dimension, and problem analysis in the trait dimension. By matching the appropriate element in each dimension to the particular activity to be carried out, principals can identify the pertinent theoretical bases for making efficient, rational decisions.

The authors provide a few specific examples of how the CFAD model can be used in administrative practice, and they recommend that principals be taught to use it during their preservice training. They point out that this early exposure to the CFAD model would enhance the principal's understanding of educational theory and its practical applications.

2 **Baltzell, D. Catherine, and Dentler, Robert A.** *Selecting American School Principals: A Sourcebook for Educators.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Abt Associates, Inc., January 31, 1983. 68 pages. ED 236 811.

While the importance of good principals is generally recognized, Baltzell and Dentler note that "remarkably little is known about just how these critical educational leaders are chosen." To find out more about the subject, the authors studied the principal selection process in ten school systems around the country.

The results were disturbing. For the most part, the school systems offered only vague criteria for principal selection. Selection committees and superintendents generally relied on "interpersonal perceptions of a candidate's physical presence, projection of a certain self-confidence and assertiveness, and embodiment of community values and methods of operation"—criteria that have little to do with determining who will or will not make a good principal.

After thoroughly examining the inadequacies of the hiring practices most commonly observed, the authors next analyze three alternative methods of selecting principals. These programs are Howard County's (Maryland) Assessment Center (following the National Association of Secondary School Principals' successful model), the Administrative Intern Program of Hayward (California) Unified School District, and the Administrative Training Program of the Montgomery County (Virginia) Public School System.

Although these programs show considerable promise, the "Exemplary Conventional Practices" of Hillsborough County (Florida) may well be the ones the typical school system—probably lacking the money for an assessment center or internship program—would find most practical. Any school system, say the authors, would do well to emulate three aspects of the Hillsborough County selection process: well-known, well-defined career ladders to the principalship; rigorous screening at entry-level positions; and team interviewing of screened and approved applicants for specific vacancies.

3 **Cornett, Lynn M.** *The Preparation and Selection of School Principals.* Atlanta, Georgia: Southern Regional Education Board, 1983. 20 pages. ED 231 052.

Recognizing the need for improvement in principal training and selection practices, the SREB held a two-day conference to discuss the subject. Cornett's report summarizes the results.

The conferees discerned that, for the most part, state certification standards in the region are too lax and vague to serve as an effective screening device for prospective principals. Further, most principals are selected on the basis of criteria that are ill-defined and unrelated to the qualities required of an effective principal.

Conferees discussed a number of alternative methods of selecting principals—most notably the Assessment Center at the University of Nebraska. Unlike NASSP assessment centers, the University of Nebraska's analyzes potential principals while they are still working on their graduate degrees in educational administration. The assessment center then helps potential principals to shape the rest of their graduate programs on the basis of their strengths and weaknesses. Also discussed was the internship program of Richland County School District One in Columbus, South Carolina, which is operated in conjunction with the University of South Carolina.

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Finally, the conferees offered four guidelines for principal selection and training: (1) School districts should delineate the principal's role and structure the school's organization so that "the principal can realistically function as the instructional leader of the school." (2) State agencies should assess graduate programs in educational administration for selectivity and for curriculum and field experiences that actually promote good principalship. (3) Local districts should develop "rational processes for the selection of personnel by some objective means." (4) Inservice programs should be "locally developed, within state guidelines, as a collaborative effort utilizing the resources of the colleges and outside agencies."

4 **Landholm, Lou Ann J.** "Observations of Participants: Center Helps One's Monitoring of Strengths, Weaknesses." *NASSP Bulletin*, 70, 486 (January 1986), pp. 24-25. EJ 331 300.

It is useful to know what researchers, school district administrators, and directors of assessment centers think about such programs. It is also important to know what the principals themselves think. Landholm—a principal who went through an assessment center program—tells of her own experience.

She acknowledges having felt considerable frustration in the early stages of the two-day session, primarily because the "fast-paced activities and demanding simulations" were mentally exhausting. As the session progressed, however, she became "impressed with the efficiency with which the activities were organized" and discovered that there were "ample opportunities to monitor specific strengths and weaknesses by participating in problem-solving exercises."

Landholm says that the "most significant aspect of the assessment process is the feedback provided to the participants." This consisted of a written report on the participant's performance in each of twelve "skill dimensions" and a confidential exit interview in which the written report was explained and any questions were answered.

Landholm found that the feedback from the assessment center helped her to formulate goals that clarified her educational philosophy. The feedback also helped her to pinpoint skills she needed to develop more fully. In addition, she found she could use the model employed by the assessors— "careful observation and documented reports about specified behaviors"—as tools to help the teachers under her to improve in *their* performance.

Landholm concludes that the time and effort put into her session at the assessment center were well spent and that the center is "a storehouse of valuable information about important job-related skills."

5 **Leithwood, Kenneth A., and others.** "Training Principals for School Improvement." *Education and Urban Society*, 17, 1 (November 1984), pp. 49-71. EJ 309 407.

As a means of school reform, principal training may well become for the 1980s what curriculum development was for the 1960s. Having made that claim, the authors argue that, for the most part, current inservice training programs are inadequate. Most such programs tend to focus on specific issues, instead of on developing the skills a principal needs to do his or her job effectively.

The authors do not claim to have developed a comprehensive program for inservice training of principals. Nevertheless, they believe their "principal profile" can be useful as a first step toward formulating such a program.

Leithwood and his colleagues suggest that those individuals who ultimately become successful principals move along a well-

defined path—from administrator through humanitarian and program manager to what the authors call "high systematic problem solver." Principals at the administrator stage are primarily concerned with "running a smooth ship." In contrast, "systematic problem solvers begin with a legitimate, comprehensive set of goals for students and seek out the most effective means for their achievement." Sometimes the search for solutions leads these principals into conflict with district administrators.

To be effective, an inservice program must recognize these four stages in a principal's development and assist the principal in moving from one stage to another.

6 **Manasse, A. Lorri.** *Improving Conditions for Principal Effectiveness: Policy Implications of Research on Effective Principals.* Washington, D.C.: Dingle Associates, Inc., 1983. 50 pages. ED 245 355.

The "growing body of research on principals' behavior and school effectiveness" ought to have some implications for state and local policy on principal selection and training. To trace those implications, Manasse reviewed a wide variety of literature on what principals actually do, on what constitutes a good principal, and on principal training and selection.

Manasse found that, whereas most principal training programs require trainees to devote large blocks of time to rational analyses and to writing, the actual work day of a principal consists of many short segments of time devoted to verbal interaction. Consequently, Manasse urges that training programs be redesigned to prepare potential principals for the "fragmented, varied, and ambiguous nature of their work lives."

Noting that leadership is a quality that administrators claim to look for in potential principals, Manasse asserts that leadership is inevitably linked to change. Consequently, Manasse warns ad-

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ministrators that if they really want effective principals, they must be prepared to hire "boat rockers."

Of special significance to those who select principals is Manasse's section on principal placement. Instead of holding up a picture of the principal who would function very well in any setting, Manasse argues that each school has its particular needs and a principal must be selected with those needs in mind. Thus the visionary and leader who functions best when delegating authority might do extremely well in a large school with many resources, but might have problems in a small school with little in the way of support staff. Conversely, the individual who thrives when taking matters into his or her own hands might do very well in a school with limited resource, but might not make the best use of resources in a large school with a large, well-trained support staff. As a corollary, Manasse argues convincingly against the practice of routinely rotating principals— on the grounds that the student suffers when his or her principal is arbitrarily replaced.

7

Murphy, Sheila C., and others. *Selecting and Training Educational Leaders to Be Facilitators of School Improvement*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, 1986. 38 pages. ED number not yet assigned.

For a number of years, state legislators, school boards members, and parents have been insisting that schools must improve. Drawing on five years of research at the Research and Development Center for Teacher Education at the University of Texas, Murphy and her associates offer suggestions for training principals to facilitate such improvements. The authors focus on three areas: leadership styles, use of the Concerns Based Adoption Model (CBAM) in facilitating improvements, and training methods.

The center's studies show that most educational leaders use one of three styles when introducing improvements. Responders *let* improvements take place. Managers *help* improvements take place. And initiators *make* improvements take place. Although the initiator style correlates most closely with the successful implementation of specific improvements, the authors caution against relying on it exclusively. The manager style, they say, correlates more closely with a positive school climate, and the style best suited for a principal in one school may be inappropriate in another.

CBAM is a diagnostic tool designed to help educational leaders figure out how to implement specific improvements and determine how successfully they are being implemented. It has four basic elements: (1) Stages of Concern, which assess the concerns and feelings of those who must actually use the improvement; (2) Levels of Use, which determine the extent to which the improvement is actually being used; (3) Innovation Configurations, which describe the improvement; and (4) Intervention Taxonomy, which describes actions taken to introduce the improvement.

The authors emphasize that training prospective principals in using the model requires giving them the time to familiarize themselves with the instrument, practice using it, receive feedback on the practice, and become comfortable with the school before actually using the model.

8

National Association of Secondary School Principals. *Performance-Based Preparation of Principals*. Reston, Virginia: NASSP, 1985. 38 pages. ED 257 211.

It seems obvious that educational programs designed for aspiring principals should focus on the skills and knowledge that principals will need in the practice of their profession. Yet the NASSP, quoting John R. Hoyle, points out that there is "little conclusive evidence about the relationship among administrator preparation, work, and effectiveness." The NASSP has prepared this report to assist schools of education in remedying this situation.

While the report acknowledges the need for "excellence in the academic and professional dimensions of principal preparation programs," it also recommends "a substantial increase in the field-based component of these programs." The NASSP stresses the field-based component not because it is more important than the academic and professional components, but rather because it is the component that traditionally has received too little attention.

In the principalship as in any profession, the report notes, there is a substantial gap between what the individual learns in the classroom and what the individual will actually confront on the job. Internship programs are the traditional means of bridging that gap. Traditional internship programs, however, often fail to provide the depth and breadth of experience needed to prepare principals for the problems they will face in a working environment. To deal with this problem, the NASSP recommends the use of a number of bridging procedures, including computer simulations, case studies, and project courses.

While noting that such procedures are important, the report asserts that the internship remains the most essential single step in preparing the prospective principal for the transition from student to school administrator. For an internship to be effective, the NASSP urges that it "be a fulltime experience spanning, ideally, the period of one academic year."

In addition to suggesting ways to improve principal training programs, the report discusses a method of program analysis. Data from professors, practitioners, and students can be used to rate substantive content areas of a program by generic skills, specific skills, and program modes. Using this method, a school of education can identify the strengths and weaknesses in its principal education program and take steps to revise th program accordingly.

9

Pellicer, Leonard O., and others. "Do It First, Then Talk about It: A Principalship Practicum." *Phi Delta Kappan*, 65, 6 (February 1984), p. 429. EJ 293 142.

This brief article describes a school principal internship program sponsored jointly by the Richland County (South Carolina) School District and the University of South Carolina. The authors claim that the program trains prospective principals to "assume leadership in planning, implementing, and evaluating selected practicum experiences; to put theoretical knowledge to work; and to acquire new knowledge and skills in school administration."

The practicum involves the student, his or her university instructor, and the supervisor at the intern site. The intern first completes a self-assessment measure that allows the directors to individualize the intern's program. From eight major administrative task areas, one area is selected for primary emphasis in the intern's program, and another area is designated for secondary emphasis. In the area of primary emphasis, the intern must "develop a product or refine a process currently in use at the school site." The intern must also conduct a variety of other duties to ensure a broad understanding of administrative processes.

During the fifteen-week internship, the university instructor and the site supervisor meet with the student and observe the intern's activities. The student is required to keep a log, which is used for discussion and evaluation purposes. At the end of the practicum, the site supervisor and the university supervisor each completes an evaluation of the intern's performance. Grades are assigned on the basis of these evaluations.

The authors report that most interns voluntarily spend far more than the required number of hours on their projects when they discover that the program gives them the "opportunity to grow

professionally" as well as "to put theory into practice."

10 **Shilling, Joseph L.** "Developing an Operational Plan: Maryland's Initiative for Quality Leadership," and Lepard, David H. "Developing an Operational Plan: The Essential Ingredients of a Plan." *NASSP Bulletin*, 70, 486 (January 1986), pp. 3-9. A two-section article. EJ 331 293 and EJ 331 294.

These two articles, part of a theme issue on NASSP Assessment Centers, are on the subject of "Developing an Operational Plan." Shilling describes Maryland's program for improving the selection and training of principals. Lepard discusses the key ingredients for developing an effective principals assessment program and describes the steps a program must go through to win NASSP's approval. Between them, they offer useful tips to administrators interested in improving the principalship.

Maryland's efforts to improve school leadership, Shilling states, are three-pronged: (1) a Commission on School-Based Administration examines "the way principals are trained, certificated, selected, assigned roles, offered staff development, and evaluated" and offers suggestions for improvement; (2) the Maryland Assessment Center Program (MACP) cooperates with the NASSP Assessment Center Project; and (3) a Research and Development Laboratory on School-Based Administration at the University of Maryland serves as a research arm for both the commission and the assessment program.

Through its assessment centers, Maryland [illegible]es to improve principal selection procedures and to provide a "clinical approach" to principals' professional development. "Candidates will not simply be screened out." Rather, they may "engage in a program designed to strengthen weaknesses identified in the assessment process."

Shilling describes the administration of the MACP, highlighting the roles of Maryland's State Department of Education, participating local education agencies, and the NASSP.

Lepard, director of an assessment center in Virginia, describes in detail the preliminary planning needed to gain NASSP approval for a principal assessment program. Operational plans must clearly state the purpose of the program. Long-term costs must be projected, and calendars for training and assessment must be developed. He also includes a sample agreement between an assessment center and the NASSP.

Lepard warns his readers not to expect quick fixes from an assessment program. "It does, however, lay the foundation of steady, step-by-step improvement in school management and leadership."

11 **Zakariya, Sally Banks.** "How to Add Snap, Crackle, and Pop to Principal Selection." *The Executive Educator*, 5, 11 (November 1983), pp. 20-23. EJ 288 173.

Educators generally agree that hiring good principals is an essential step toward developing and maintaining good schools. Yet, as Zakariya points out, in most school systems the actual process for selecting principals does not reflect this concern for the importance of the position.

The reasons for this disparity between the importance generally ascribed to the principalship and the actual processes by which principals are selected are complex. Often school systems fail to take the time to figure out exactly what they want in a principal. This failure, in turn, often leads to what Zakariya calls the "tap-on-the-shoulder" approach to hiring— appointing a particular individual to a principalship simply because the superintendent has a gut feeling that he or she will be able to get the job done. When we consider further that most hiring is done in a hurry—a school system suddenly finds itself with a vacancy and scrambles to have it filled—we can easily see that finding a good principal often becomes a matter of chance rather than a result of sound planning.

After discussing the shortfalls of conventional hiring practices, Zakariya reviews three alternative approaches for selecting principals: internships, structured interviews, and assessment centers. All three have their drawbacks—notably, all involve the expenditure of more time and money than do conventional methods—but they hold out the promise of ensuring that a school system will have a reasonable chance of selecting the principals it needs.

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